Align Men’s and Women’s Cross Country with other Division I Sports in Qualifying for NCAA Championships

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NCAA DIVISION I MEN’S & WOMEN’S CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Presently, 316 NCAA Division I institutions sponsor the sport of Cross Country for men and 348 for women. Women’s Cross Country is the second-largest sport sponsored by Division I institutions for women. Men’s Cross Country is the second-largest sport sponsored by Division I institutions for men.

Currently, Men’s and Women’s Cross Country are the only NCAA Division I sports with championships that don’t require any type of qualification into the NCAA first round regional championship competition. In addition, Men’s and Women’s Cross Country are the only NCAA Division I sports that qualify teams to the championships without providing automatic qualification to conference champions. The current nine regional meets, sites selected and meets funded by the NCAA, are literally all-comers meets for any teams or individuals who wish to participate within their region. The postseason championships for these sports are out of line with other NCAA Division I championships.

The NCAA is spending approximately $180,000.00 to $200,000.00 per year on these nine regional meets. In addition, host institutions are collectively spending another $100,000.00 to $200,000.00 per year, depending on host and location, to conduct these meets. The majority of these expenditures are for duplicate services (e.g., timing services, port-a-lets, etc.) at each site. Further, these funds are being spent on sites of which the majority each year do not meet the course requirements in the NCAA Rules Book.

The enclosed document presents a championships qualifying format for Men’s and Women’s Cross Country that would bring the championships process for these two sports in line with championships for other NCAA Division I sports. It is a way to make the sport more relevant in the eyes of collegiate administrators, fans, media, and the general public. It is also a way to address financial, geographical, and qualifying challenges that are present in the current format. Further, this Championships qualifying format would bring a level of Championships recognition to an expanded number of student-athletes and institutions; enhance the championship experience for student-athletes and institutions; save money and control future costs; create revenue streams; include championships access to all conferences; increase exposure for the sport; reduce the number of sites to administer; and provide appropriate NCAA oversight.
NCAA DIVISION I CROSS COUNTRY
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS QUALIFYING FORMAT

FIRST ROUND OF THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

TEAM QUALIFYING

Qualify seventy-two (72) men’s teams and seventy-two (72) women’s teams into the First Round of the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships.

Of the seventy-two (72) teams selected for each gender, automatic qualifying status shall be granted to each of the thirty-two (32) NCAA Division I conference championship teams and an additional forty (40) NCAA Division I cross country teams would be selected as at-large entries.

These seventy-two (72) teams of seven student-athletes will provide a championship participation opportunity and championship experience for five hundred and four (504) student-athletes per gender through the team selection format.

At-LARGE TEAM SELECTIONS

First Round at-large selections for the forty (40) at-large teams per gender shall be made under the supervision of the NCAA Division I Track and Field/Cross Country Sport Committee.

At-large selections for teams in each gender shall be based on established criteria approved by the NCAA Division I Track and Field/Cross Country Sport Committee. The criteria shall include consideration of a team’s performance during the regular season and through their respective conference championship; see pages 10-13 of this document for recommended at-large team selection criteria.

At-large selections for teams shall be announced on the Sunday of the last conference championships weekend.

INDIVIDUAL QUALIFYING

Qualify forty (40) individual male student-athletes and forty (40) individual female student-athletes into the First Round of the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships.

Of the forty (40) individuals selected for each gender, automatic qualifying status shall be granted to each individual winner of an NCAA Division I Conference Championship who is not a member of one of the seventy-two (72) teams selected per gender for entry into the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships.

The remaining individual slots for males and females shall be selected at-large from a pool of all eligible NCAA Division I cross country student-athletes who are not a member of one of the
seventy-two (72) teams selected per gender for entry into the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships.

These individual selections will provide a championship participation opportunity and championship experience for an additional forty (40) individual student-athletes per gender through the individual selection format. Further, these individual selections provide championship access and representation for a greater number of NCAA Division I institutions.

**At-LARGE INDIVIDUAL SELECTIONS**

First Round at-large selections for the remaining at-large individuals shall be made under the supervision of the NCAA Division I Track and Field/Cross Country Sport Committee.

At-large individual selections per gender shall be based on criteria approved by the NCAA Division I Track and Field/Cross Country Sport Committee. The criteria shall include consideration of an individual’s performance during the regular season and through their respective conference championship; see page 14 of this document for recommended individual selection criteria.

At-large selections for individuals shall be announced on the Sunday of the last conference championships weekend.
COMPETITION

The First Round of competition shall consist of the seventy-two (72) qualifying teams per gender and forty (40) individual qualifiers per gender, and provides opportunities for five hundred forty-four (544) student-athletes per gender (1,088 total) to compete in the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships.

The First Round of competition at the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships shall consist of two (2) men’s races and two (2) women’s races at a single site.

Each men’s race and each women’s race will consist of thirty-six (36) teams and twenty (20) individuals.

After teams have been selected into the First Round of the Championships, all teams will be seeded and serpentined into these races based on a ranked order list of teams created under the supervision of the NCAA Division I Track & Field/Cross Country Sport Committee utilizing the approved ratings percentage index (RPI).

Teams will be assigned to one of the thirty-six (36) team starting boxes in each race based on a random draw.

After individuals have been selected into the First Round of the Championships, all individuals will be seeded and serpentined into these races based on a ranked order list of individuals created under the supervision of the NCAA Division I Track & Field/Cross Country Sport Committee utilizing the approved individual ratings percentage index (iRPI).

Individuals will be assigned to one of the three (3) individual starting boxes in each race based on a random draw. In addition, each individual qualifier will be assigned to one of the seven (7) starting positions within their respective starting box based on a random draw.

QUALIFYING TO FINAL ROUND OF THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The top sixteen (16) placing teams in each men’s race and the top sixteen (16) placing teams in each women’s race at the First Round of the Championships will advance to the Final Round of the Championships.

The top sixteen (16) placing individuals in each men’s race and the top sixteen (16) placing individuals in each women’s race at the First Round of the Championships who are not members of one of the thirty-two (32) advancing teams per gender will advance to the Final Round of the Championships.

These thirty-two (32) advancing teams of seven student-athletes and thirty-two (32) advancing individual student-athletes will provide a championship participation opportunity and
championship experience at the Final Round of the Championships for two hundred fifty-six (256) student-athletes per gender (512 total).

The qualifying format provides an opportunity for one hundred sixty (160) student-athletes in each of the two races per gender (320 total) to compete for one of the sixteen (16) individual qualifying spots per race per gender (32 total) to the Final Round of the Championships.

NOTE: The current NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships allow for two hundred fifty-five (255) participants per gender. This format protects the current participant number per gender (it actually adds one (1) additional participant per gender), while staying within the current NCAA Championship funding formula for NCAA Division I Men’s and Women’s Cross Country.

SITE

The First Round of the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships would be held at one site, which would be a separate site from the Final Round of the Championships.

**Men's Championships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Championships Qualifiers</th>
<th>First Round Championships Participants</th>
<th>Advance to Final Round Championships</th>
<th>Final Round Championships Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>72 Teams 40 Individuals</td>
<td>Race A: 36 Teams 20 Individuals</td>
<td>Top 16 Teams Top 16 Individuals</td>
<td>32 Teams 32 Individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Race B: 36 Teams 20 Individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women's Championships

Championships Qualifiers

First Round Championships Participants

Race A:
36 Teams
20 Individuals

Race B:
36 Teams
20 Individuals

Advance to Final Round Championships

Top 16 Teams
Top 16 Individuals

Final Round Championships Participants

32 Teams
32 Individuals
FINAL ROUND OF THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

TEAM QUALIFYING

Qualify thirty-two (32) men’s teams and thirty-two (32) women’s teams from the First Round of the Championships to the Final Round of the Championships.

INDIVIDUAL QUALIFYING

Qualify a total of thirty-two (32) individual men and thirty-two (32) individual women from the First Round of the Championships to the Final Round of the Championships.

COMPETITION

The Final Round of the Championships at the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships shall consist of one (1) men’s race and one (1) women’s race.

The men’s race and the women’s race will each consist of thirty-two (32) teams and thirty-two (32) individuals.

Teams will be assigned to one of the thirty-two (32) team starting boxes based on a random draw in each championship race.

Individuals will be assigned to one of the four (4) individual starting boxes in each race based on a random draw. In addition, each individual qualifier will be assigned to one of the eight (8) starting positions within their respective starting box based on a random draw.

SITE

The Final Round of the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships shall be held at site different than that of the First Round of the Championships.
DISADVANTAGES OF THE CURRENT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS QUALIFYING PROCESS

Student-Athlete Experience
- Participation at regional meets by student-athletes and institutions is insufficiently recognized by administrators, peers and the media as an NCAA Championship achievement
- Student-athlete championship experience is non-existent at current regional meets, complete lack of a championship environment and setting
- Few spectators attend current regional meets
- Basically no media attend current regional meets

Budget
- Nine regional sites equals a duplication of cost and services that are essentially nine-fold
- Revenues from tickets, parking, merchandise, concessions, etc., are basically non-existent
- Regional meets are costing host institutions several thousands of dollars above the NCAA stipend received by the host, in addition to requiring institutional staffing hours and services leading up the competition
- Budgets for regional meets will continue to escalate as costs rise for duplicate services at multiple sites
- Institution-by-institution, teams are traveling coast-to-coast in an effort to pick up at-large qualifying “points” during regular season

Qualifying and Competitive Equity
- Cross Country is the only NCAA sport that doesn’t have a qualifying process to gain access into the postseason championships
- Regional meets are nine “all-comers” meets that any institution or individual in a region can participate in
- Cross Country is the only NCAA Division I sport that qualifies teams to the championships and doesn’t award conference champion teams with an automatic berth into the NCAA Championships
- Little head-to-head competition is used in current selection and advancement process to nationals
- Coaches can dictate which institutions have an opportunity to earn qualifying “points” during the season
- Coaches can control what regular season meets actually offer opportunities for qualifying “points”
- A team’s entry at a regional meet retroactively determines the team’s “A” squad for the season

Branding/Marketing/Media
- Branding and marketing for regional meets is non-existent
- On-site media and pre- and post-meet coverage by media at regional meets is virtually non-existent
- Meet presentation is grossly insufficient for a championship round
- Use of spectator aids, such as a video board, is an oddity
- Webcast presentations of regional meets are rare at best and television is non existence

Championship Administration and Course
- Most regional meets are run on courses that don’t meet course requirements in the NCAA Rules Book
- One NCAA Championships liaison is managing nine regional meets plus pre-planning and final site
- Field size and the number of teams actually competing at each regional meet varies widely
- Number of institutions sponsoring cross country per region varies widely, from eighteen to forty-nine
ADVANTAGES OF THE PROPOSED CHAMPIONSHIPS FORMAT

Student-Athlete Experience
- Student-athletes and institutions recognized and honored for qualifying to an NCAA Championship
- A true NCAA postseason championship and student-athlete experience
- Enhances opportunity for student-athletes to compete in front of a crowd in a championship environment
- A championship atmosphere and setting, rather than an all-comers cross country meet

Budget
- Current NCAA expenditures for nine regional meets (approximately $180,000 to $200,000 annually) can be redistributed without additional funding
- Eliminates the need for supplemental funds from host institutions at nine regional sites
- Eliminates future escalating cost for duplicated services associated with nine regional meets and sites
- Creates an opportunity for revenue streams from tickets, merchandise, concessions, parking, etc.
- Reduces the need for institutions to travel and schedule nationally during the regular season

Qualifying and Competitive Equity
- Establishes postseason qualifying for cross country in place of regional all-comer meets
- Creates an automatic qualifier for all Division I conferences sponsoring the sport
- Provides institutions a more equitable opportunity to qualify for the Final Round of the Championships
- First Round at-large teams mean no team deserving qualification to Final Round will be left out
- First Round at-large individuals mean no individual deserving qualification to Final Round will be left out
- Opportunity to qualify not affected by an institution’s or individual’s geographic location or regional alignment
- Head-to-head competition drives qualifying
- Single site First Round allows teams to be equitably seeded into two races, regardless of geography
- Increased value to performance at each conference championship

Branding/Marketing/Media
- Provides multiple opportunities for post-season Cross Country marketing, promotion and exposure
- Increased exposure and recognition for student athletes, institutions and conferences
- Adds value to sponsoring Cross Country for every NCAA Division I conference and institution
- A championship that can be covered by media outlets both onsite and from afar
- Web streaming and/or television broadcast possible both physically and financially
- Use of visual enhancements and electronic visuals more financially feasible

Championships Administration and Course
- Only one course that meets NCAA rule requirements needed for First Round competition
- Requirements for hosting can be strengthened to ensure student athletes of a championships experience every year
- One site for NCAA to administer, finance, plan, staff and provide officials for
- A consistent field size at the First Round site each year
- Teams can be seeded without splitting men’s and women’s teams at separate sites
Team Qualification
NCAA Division I Cross Country
Championships Selection Information

Allocation of Team Berths
The championship provides for a field of 72 men’s and 72 women’s teams

Automatic Qualification
Conference Champions that have been certified as automatic qualifiers advance to the field automatically

At-Large Selection
The remainder of the field will be chosen by applying specific, objective regular-season analysis throughout the process

Team At-Large Selection Summary

ELIGIBILITY
To be eligible for at-large consideration:
Teams must face and receive a result against at least 30 opponents during the regular season. Opponents need NOT be unique.

Eligible races:
Must have more than one Division I institution(s) that finish five or more athletes (intrasquad races and competition against only non-Division I institutions are not eligible)

First Consideration
REMAINING Eligible Teams
RPI Top 50 AND WinPct>. 500
FIRST CONSIDERATION SELECTION POOL
Top 20 teams* (plus ties)
SELECTED 20 at-large teams

Second Consideration
REMAINING Eligible Teams
RPI Top 75
SECOND CONSIDERATION SELECTION POOL
Top 15 teams* (plus ties)
SELECTED 15 at-large teams

Third Consideration
REMAINING Eligible Teams
RPI Top 100
THIRD CONSIDERATION SELECTION POOL
Top 5 teams* (or remainder to 40 cap)
SELECTED 5 at-large teams
**Team At-Large First Consideration Selection Detail**

**Task:** Establish pool ranking

**Guarantees:***
- **Eligible for At-Large:** Teams must face and receive a result against at least 30 opponents during the countable season. Teams need NOT be unique.

**Selecting the Pool:***
- **First Consideration Selection Pool:**
  - Ranking of Current Pool
  - **Ranking of WWI**
    - **Ratings Percentage Index (RPI):**
      - Composite of winning pct. (25%), opponents' winning pct. (50%), and opponents' opponents' winning pct. (25%)
    - **Quality Teams Selected (QTS):**
      - Teams with an RPI ranking in the division's top 75 AND already selected into the championship field
    - **Weighted Winning Index (WWI):**
      - For teams with a record .500 or better in a category, WWI is calculated by formula: $10 \times (W-L) + W$
      - Otherwise, WWI is simply the team's winning percentage.

**Dealing with Ties:***
- The top 20 teams PLUS ties advance to the championship field.

**Eligible for At-Large:***
- Teams must face and receive a result against at least 30 opponents during the countable season. Teams need NOT be unique.

**Advancing to the Pool:***
- Teams must have a final RPI rank in the top 50 AND a final winning percentage above .500.
Team At-Large Second Consideration Selection Detail

**COMPOSITE RANKING FORMULA**

- **Ranking of WWI**
  - VS Current Pool
  - VS QTS (Quality Teams Selected)
  - VS Region Top 4s in NRPI Top 100

**KEYS**

- **Ratings Percentage Index (RPI)**: Composite of winning pct. (25%), opponents’ winning pct. (50%), and opponents’ opponents’ winning pct. (25%)
- **Quality Teams Selected (QTS)**: Teams with an RPI ranking in the division’s top 75 and already selected into the championship field
- **Weighted Winning Index (WWI)**: For teams with a record .500 or better in a category, WWI is calculated by formula: $10 \times (W-L) + W$
  - Otherwise, WWI is simply the team’s winning percentage.

**DEALING WITH TIES**

The top 15 teams PLUS ties advance to the championship field, so long as the total teams after this consideration chosen at-large total 40 or fewer.
Top number of teams needed to fill championship field

Pool Composite Ranking

FILLING THE REMAINDER
The number of teams remaining to be chosen at-large could be as many as five, but could be less if there are ties in the first or second considerations.

DEALING WITH TIES
Ties for the final spot(s) into the championship field will be broken in the following way (if at anytime the tie(s) are broken, the process stops):
- Head-to-head results (the earliest possible result starting with the first-weekend of October) among tied teams with most recent result taking precedence
- Win-loss record versus common opponents
- Win-loss record versus quality teams selected

TEAM AT-LARGE THIRD CONSIDERATION SELECTION DETAIL

LAST CHANCE AT THE POOL
Teams move to the pool if they have: Top 100 National RPI

STAYING IN THE POOL
Teams in the second consideration pool not chosen at-large move to the third consideration automatically

REMAINING Eligible Teams

Task:
Establish pool ranking

COMPOSITE RANKING FORMULA
Rankings are added together with the lowest numbers being best

COMPOSITE RANKING FORMULA

RATINGS PERCENTAGE INDEX (RPI)
Composite of winning pct. (25%), opponents' winning pct. (50%), and opponents' opponents' winning pct. (25%)

QUALITY TEAMS SELECTED (QTS)
Teams with an RPI ranking in the division's top 75 AND already selected into the championship field

WEIGHTED WINNING INDEX (WWI)
For teams with a record .500 or better in a category, WWI is calculated by formula: 10 x (W-L) + W
Otherwise, WWI is simply the team's winning percentage.

KEYS

REM...
Individual Qualification
NCAA Division I Cross Country
Championships Selection Information

Allocation of Individual Berths
The championship provides for 40 men’s and 40 women’s individuals

Automatic Qualification
Those that win an individual championship in a certified conference, and was not a member of a team that earned a national-championship berth, advance to the field automatically.

At-Large Selection
The remainder of the field will be chosen in rank-order based on national individual RPI (iRPI) among individuals that are not already a member of a team that earned a national-championship berth or not already selected automatically via an individual conference championship.

Number of automatic qualifiers will vary year-to-year
Number of at-large selections will vary year-to-year. Automatic plus at-large selections will not exceed 40 per gender.

Individual At-Large Selection Summary

ELIGIBILITY
To be eligible for at-large consideration athletes must:
Finish two or more eligible races during regular season AND receive a rank-order result versus at least 100 Division I individuals during the regular season. Opponents need NOT be unique.
-OR- finish its conference championship race.

Eligible races:
Must have more than one Division I institution(s) that have at least one finisher (intrasquad races and competition against only non-Division I institutions are not eligible for count or individual RPI).

INDIVIDUAL RATINGS PERCENTAGE INDEX (iRPI)
iRPI is a decimal number between 0 and 1 which is the average of:

THOSE WHO FINISH THREE (3) RACES OR MORE IN REGULAR SEASON
1 PART: Individual’s winning percentage
2 PART: Individual’s opponents’ cumulative win-loss record in percentage (aka strength-of-schedule)

THOSE WHO FINISH ONLY TWO (2) MEETS IN REGULAR SEASON
1 PART: Individual’s winning percentage
2 PARTS: Individual’s opponents’ cumulative win-loss record in percentage (aka strength-of-schedule)

THOSE WHO FINISH ONLY CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIP IN REGULAR SEASON
1 PART: Individual’s winning percentage
2 PARTS: Individual’s opponents’ cumulative win-loss record in percentage (aka strength-of-schedule)

Note: This formula differs from the RPI used in evaluation of teams. Ties submitted by timers are ignored in winning percentage.

SELECTIONS
The number of individuals to be selected at-large (per gender) will equal 40 minus the number of individuals selected automatically via a conference individual championship.

Those athletes that are a squad member of a team already qualified for the national-championship field are not eligible to be selected as an at-large individual.

The remaining number of eligible individuals will be placed in ranked-order based on their individual RPI (iRPI). Selections will be made in that order until the number of individuals (automatic and at-large combined) equal 40.